

“THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR”

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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IS HE POPENJOY?

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER XXXVI. POPENJOY IS POPENJOY.

THEN came Lady Brabazon's party. Lord George said nothing further to his wife about Jack De Baron for some days after that storm in Berkeley Square—nor did she to him. She was quite contented that matters should remain as they now were. She had vindicated herself, and if he made no further accusation, she was willing to be appeased. He was by no means contented; but, as a day had been fixed for them to leave London, and that day was now but a month absent, he hardly knew how to insist upon an alteration of their plans. If he did so he must declare war against the dean, and, for a time, against his wife also. He postponed, therefore, any decision, and allowed matters to go on as they were. Mary was no doubt triumphant in her spirit. She had conquered him for a time, and felt that it was so. But she was, on that account, more tender and observant to him than ever. She even offered to give up Lady Brabazon's party altogether. She did not much care for Lady Brabazon's party, and was willing to make a sacrifice that was perhaps no sacrifice. But to this he did not assent. He declared himself to be quite ready for Lady Brabazon's party, and to Lady Brabazon's party they went. As she was on the staircase she asked him a question. “Do you mind my having a waltz to-night?” He could not bring himself for the moment to be stern enough to refuse. He knew that the pernicious man would not be there. He was quite sure that the question was not asked in reference to the pernicious

man. He did not understand, as he should have done, that a claim was being made for general emancipation, and he muttered something which was intended to imply assent. Soon afterwards she took two or three turns with a stout middle-aged gentleman, a Count somebody, who was connected with the German embassy. Nothing on earth could have been more harmless or apparently uninteresting. Then she signified to him that she had done her duty to Lady Brabazon and was quite ready to go home. “I'm not particularly bored,” he said; “don't mind me.” “But I am,” she whispered, laughing, “and as I know you don't care about it, you might as well take me away.” So he took her home. They were not there above half an hour, but she had carried her point about the waltzing.

On the next day the dean came to town to attend a meeting at Mr. Battle's chambers by appointment. Lord George met him there, of course, as they were at any rate supposed to act in strict concert; but on these days the dean did not stay in Munster Court when in London.

He would always visit his daughter, but would endeavour to do so in her husband's absence, and was unwilling even to dine there. “We shall be better friends down at Brotherton,” he said to her. “He is always angry with me after discussing this affair of his brother's; and I am not quite sure that he likes seeing me here.” This he had said on a previous occasion, and now the two men met in Lincoln's Inn Fields, not having even gone there together.

At this meeting the lawyer told them a strange story, and one which to the dean was most unsatisfactory—one which he absolutely determined to disbelieve. “The

marquis," said Mr. Battle, "had certainly gone through two marriage ceremonies with the Italian lady—one before the death, and one after the death, of her first reputed husband. And as certainly the so-called Popenjoy had been born before the second ceremony." So much the dean believed very easily, and the information tallied altogether with his own views. If this were so, the so-called Popenjoy could not be a real Popenjoy, and his daughter would be Marchioness of Brotherton when this wicked ape of a marquis should die; and her son, should she have one, would be the future marquis. But then there came the remainder of the lawyer's story. Mr. Battle was inclined, from all that he had learned, to believe that the marchioness had never really been married at all to the man whose name she had first borne, and that the second marriage had been celebrated merely to save appearances.

"What appearances!" exclaimed the dean. Mr. Battle shrugged his shoulders. Lord George sat in gloomy silence. "I don't believe a word of it," said the dean.

Then the lawyer went on with his story. This lady had been betrothed early in life to the Marchese Luigi; but the man had become insane—partially insane, and by fits and starts. For some reason, which might probably never be understood, the lady's family had thought it expedient that the lady should bear the name of the man to whom she was to be married. She had done so for some years, and had been in possession of some income belonging to him. But Mr. Battle was of opinion that she had never been Luigi's wife. Further enquiries might possibly be made, and might add to further results. But they would be very expensive. A good deal of money had already been spent. "What did Lord George wish?"

"I think we have done enough," said Lord George slowly, thinking also that he had been already constrained to do much too much.

"It must be followed out to the end," said the dean. "What! Here is a woman who professed for years to be a man's wife, who bore his name, who was believed by everybody to have been his wife—"

"I did not say that, Mr. Dean," interrupted the lawyer.

"Who lived on the man's revenues as his wife, and even bore his title, and now in such an emergency as this we are to take a cock-and-bull story as gospel. Remember, Mr. Battle, what is at stake."

"Very much is at stake, Mr. Dean, and therefore these enquiries have been made at a very great expense. But our own evidence, as far as it goes, is all against us. The Luigi family say that there was no marriage. Her family say that there was, but cannot prove it. The child may die, you know."

"Why should he die?" asked Lord George.

"I am trying the matter all round, you know. I am told the poor child is in ill-health. One has got to look at probabilities. Of course you do not abandon a right by not prosecuting it now."

"It would be a cruelty to the boy to let him be brought up as Lord Popenjoy, and afterwards dispossessed," said the dean.

"You, gentlemen, must decide," said the lawyer. "I only say that I do not recommend further steps."

"I will do nothing further," said Lord George. "In the first place, I cannot afford it."

"We will manage that between us," said the dean. "We need not trouble Mr. Battle with that. Mr. Battle will not fear but that all expenses will be paid."

"Not in the least," said Mr. Battle, smiling.

"I do not at all believe the story," said the dean. "It does not sound like truth. If I spent my last shilling in sifting the matter to the bottom, I would go on with it. Though I were obliged to leave England for twelve months myself, I would do it. A man is bound to ascertain his own rights."

"I will have nothing more to do with it," said Lord George, rising from his chair. "As much has been done as duty required; perhaps more. Mr. Battle, good morning. If we could know as soon as possible what this unfortunate affair has cost, I shall be obliged." He asked his father-in-law to accompany him, but the dean said that he would speak a word or two further to Mr. Battle, and remained.

At his club Lord George was much surprised to find a note from his brother. The note was as follows :

"Would you mind coming to me here to-morrow or the next day, at three? B. 'Scumberg's Hotel, Tuesday."

This to Lord George was very strange indeed. He could not but remember all the circumstances of his former visit to his brother—how he had been insulted, how his wife had been vilified, how his brother had heaped scorn on him. At first he thought that he was bound to refuse to do

as he was asked. But why should his brother ask him? And his brother was his brother—the head of his family. He decided at last that he would go, and left a note himself at Scumberg's Hotel that evening, saying that he would be there on the morrow.

He was very much perplexed in spirit as he thought of the coming interview. He went to the dean's club and to the dean's hotel, hoping to find the dean, and thinking that, as he had consented to act with the dean against his brother, he was bound in honour to let the dean know of the new phase in the affair. But he did not find his father-in-law. The dean returned to Brotherton on the following morning, and therefore knew nothing of this meeting till some days after it had taken place. The language which the marquis had used to his brother, when they were last together, had been such as to render any friendly intercourse almost impossible. And then the mingled bitterness, frivolity, and wickedness of his brother, made every tone of the man's voice and every glance of his eye distasteful to Lord George. Lord George was always honest, was generally serious, and never malicious. There could be no greater contrast than that which had been produced between the brothers, either by difference of disposition from their birth, or by the varied circumstances of a residence on an Italian lake and one at Manor Cross. The marquis thought his brother to be a fool, and did not scruple to say so on all occasions. Lord George felt that his brother was a knave, but would not have so called him on any consideration. The marquis, in sending for his brother, hoped that, even after all that had passed, he might make use of Lord George. Lord George, in going to his brother, hoped that, even after all that had passed, he might be of use to the marquis.

When he was shown into the sitting-room at the hotel, the marchioness was again there. She, no doubt, had been tutored. She got up at once and shook hands with her brother-in-law, smiling graciously. It must have been a comfort to both of them that they spoke no common language, as they could hardly have had many thoughts to interchange with each other.

"I wonder why the deuce you never learned Italian!" said the marquis.

"We never were taught," said Lord George.

"No; nobody in England ever is taught

anything but Latin and Greek, with this singular result, that after ten or a dozen years of learning not one in twenty knows a word of either language. That is our English idea of education. In after life a little French may be picked up, from necessity; but it is French of the very worst kind. My wonder is that Englishmen can hold their own in the world at all."

"They do," said Lord George, to whom all this was ear-piercing blasphemy. The national conviction that an Englishman could thrash three foreigners, and if necessary eat them, was strong with him.

"Yes; there is a ludicrous strength even in their pigheadedness. But I always think that Frenchmen, Italians, and Prussians must, in dealing with us, be filled with infinite disgust. They must ever be saying, 'Pig, pig, pig,' beneath their breath, at every turn."

"They don't dare to say it out loud," said Lord George.

"They are too courteous, my dear fellow." Then he said a few words to his wife in Italian, upon which she left the room, again shaking hands with her brother-in-law, and again smiling.

Then the marquis rushed at once into the middle of his affairs. "Don't you think, George, that you are an infernal fool to quarrel with me?"

"You have quarrelled with me. I haven't quarrelled with you."

"Oh no; not at all! When you send lawyer's clerks all over Italy to try to prove my boy to be a bastard—that is not quarrelling with me! When you accuse my wife of bigamy, that is not quarrelling with me! When you conspire to make my house in the country too hot to hold me, that is not quarrelling with me!"

"How have I conspired? With whom have I conspired?"

"When I explained my wishes about the house at Cross Hall, why did you encourage those foolish old maids to run counter to me? You must have understood pretty well that it would not suit either of us to be near the other, and yet you choose to stick up for legal rights."

"We thought it better for my mother."

"My mother would have consented to anything that I proposed. Do you think I don't know how the land lies? Well; what have you learned in Italy?" Lord George was silent. "Of course, I know. I'm not such a fool as not to keep my ears and eyes open. As far as your enquiries

have gone yet, are you justified in calling Popenjoy a bastard?"

"I have never called him so—never. I have always declared my belief and my wishes to be in his favour."

"Then why the deuce have you made all this rumpus?"

"Because it was necessary, to be sure. When a man marries the same wife twice over—"

"Have you never heard of that being done before? Are you so ignorant as not to know that there are a hundred little reasons which may make that expedient? You have made your enquiries now, and what is the result?"

Lord George paused a moment before he replied, and then answered with absolute honesty. "It is all very odd to me. That may be my English prejudice. But I do think that your boy is legitimate."

"You are satisfied as to that?"

He paused again, meditating his reply. He did not wish to be untrue to the dean, but then he was very anxious to be true to his brother. He remembered that in the dean's presence he had told the lawyer that he would have nothing to do with further enquiries. He had asked for the lawyer's bill, thereby withdrawing from the investigation. "Yes," he said slowly; "I am satisfied."

"And you mean to do nothing further?"

Again he was very slow, remembering how necessary it would be that he should tell all this to the dean, and how full of wrath the dean would be. "No; I do not mean to do anything further."

"I may take that as your settled purpose?"

There was another pause, and then he spoke. "Yes; you may."

"Then, George, let us try and forget what has passed. It cannot pay for you and me to quarrel. I shall not stay in England very long. I don't like it. It was necessary that the people about should know that I had a wife and son, and so I brought him and her to this comfortless country. I shall return before the winter, and for anything that I care you may all go back to Manor Cross."

"I don't think my mother would like that."

"Why shouldn't she like it? I suppose I was to be allowed to have my own house when I wanted it? I hope there was no offence in that, even to that dragon Sarah? At any rate, you may as well look after the property; and if they won't live there,

you can. But there's one question I want to ask you."

"Well?"

"What do you think of your precious father-in-law? and what do you think that I must think of him? Will you not admit that for a vulgar, impudent brute, he is about as bad as even England can supply?" Of course Lord George had nothing to say in answer to this. "He is going on with this tomfoolery, I believe?"

"You mean the enquiry?"

"Yes; I mean the enquiry whether my son and your nephew is a bastard. I know he put you up to it. Am I right in saying that he has not abandoned it?"

"I think you are right."

"Then by Heaven I'll ruin him. He may have a little money, but I don't think his purse is quite so long as mine. I'll lead him such a dance that he shall wish he had never heard the name of Germain. I'll make his deanery too hot to hold him. Now, George, as between you and me, this shall be all passed over. That poor child is not strong, and after all you may probably be my heir. I shall never live in England, and you are welcome to the house. I can be very bitter, but I can forgive; and as far as you are concerned, I do forgive. But I expect you to drop your precious father-in-law." Lord George was again silent. He could not say that he would drop the dean; but at this moment he was not sufficiently fond of the dean to rise up in his stirrups and fight a battle for him. "You understand me," continued the marquis, "I don't want any assurance from you. He is determined to prosecute an enquiry adverse to the honour of your family, and in opposition to your settled convictions. I don't think that after that you can doubt about your duty. Come and see me again before long; won't you?" Lord George said that he would come again before long, and then departed.

As he walked home his mind was sorely perplexed and divided. He had made up his mind to take no further share in the Popenjoy investigation, and must have been right to declare as much to his brother. His conscience was clear as to that. And then there were many reasons which induced him to feel coldly about the dean. His own wife had threatened him with her father. And the dean was always driving him. And he hated the dean's money. He felt that the dean was not quite all that a gentleman should be. But, nevertheless, it behoved him above all

things to be honest and straightforward with the dean.

There had been something in his interview with his brother to please him, but it had not been all delightful.

CHAPTER XXXVII. PREPARATIONS FOR THE BALL.

How was he to keep faith with the dean? This was Lord George's first trouble after his reconciliation with his brother. The dean was back at the Deanery, and Lord George mistrusted his own power of writing such a letter as would be satisfactory on so abstruse a matter. He knew that he should fail in making a good story, even face to face, and that his letter would be worse than spoken words. In intellect he was much inferior to the dean, and was only too conscious of his own inferiority. In this condition of mind he told his story to his wife. She had never even seen the marquis, and had never quite believed in those ogre qualities which had caused so many groans to Lady Sarah and Lady Susanna. When, therefore, her husband told her that he had made his peace with his brother, she was inclined to rejoice. "And Popenjoy is Popenjoy," she said, smiling.

"I believe he is, with all my heart."

"And that is to be an end of it, George? You know that I have never been eager for any grandeur."

"I know it. You have behaved beautifully all along."

"Oh, I won't boast. Perhaps I ought to have been more ambitious for you. But I hate quarrels, and I shouldn't like to have claimed anything which did not really belong to us. It is all over now."

"I can't answer for your father."

"But you and papa are all one."

"Your father is very steadfast. He does not know yet that I have seen my brother. I think you might write to him. He ought to know what has taken place. Perhaps he would come up again if he heard that I had been with my brother."

"Shall I ask him to come here?"

"Certainly. Why should he not come here? There is his room. He can always come if he pleases." So the matter was left, and Mary wrote her letter. It was not very lucid—but it could hardly have been lucid, the writer knowing so few of the details. "George has become friends with his brother," she said, "and wishes me to tell you. He says that Popenjoy is Popenjoy, and I am very glad. It was such a trouble. George thinks you will

come up to town when you hear, and begs you will come here. Do come, papa! It makes me quite wretched when you go to that horrid hotel. There is such a lot of quarrelling, and it almost seems as if you were going to quarrel with us when you don't come here. Pray, papa, never, never do that. If I thought you and George weren't friends it would break my heart. Your room is always ready for you, and if you'll say what day you'll be here I will get a few people to meet you." The letter was much more occupied with her desire to see her father, than with that momentous question on which her father was so zealously intent. Popenjoy is Popenjoy! It was very easy to assert so much. Lord George would no doubt give way readily, because he disliked the trouble of the contest. But it was not so with the dean. "He is no more Popenjoy than I am Popenjoy," said the dean to himself when he read the letter. Yes, he must go up to town again—he must know what had really taken place between the two brothers. That was essential, and he did not doubt but that he should get the exact truth from Lord George. But he would not go to Mansfield Court. There was already a difference of opinion between him and his son-in-law sufficient to make such a sojourn disagreeable—if not disagreeable to himself, he knew that it would be so to Lord George. He was sorry to vex Mary, but Mary's interests were more at his heart than her happiness. It was now the business of his life to make her a marchioness, and that business he would follow whether he made himself, her, and others happy or unhappy. He wrote to her, bidding her tell her husband that he would again be in London on a day which he named, but adding that for the present he would prefer going to the hotel. "I cannot help it," said Lord George moodily. "I have done all I could to make him welcome here. If he chooses to stand off and be stiff he must do so."

At this time Lord George had many things to vex him. Every day he received at his club a letter from Mrs. Houghton, and each letter was a little dagger. He was abused by every epithet, every innuendo, and every accusation familiar to the tongues and pens of the irritated female mind. A stranger reading them would have imagined that he had used all the arts of a Lothario to entrap the unguarded affections of the writer, and then, when successful, had first neglected the lady and

afterwards betrayed her. And with every stab so given, there was a command expressed that he should come instantly to Berkeley Square, in order that he might receive other and worse gashes at the better convenience of the assailant. But as Mrs. Bond's ducks would certainly not have come out of the pond had they fully understood the nature of that lady's invitation, so neither did Lord George go to Berkeley Square in obedience to these commands. Then there came a letter which to him was no longer a little dagger, but a great sword—a sword making a wound so wide that his life-blood seemed to flow. There was no accusation of betrayal in this letter; it was simply the heartbroken wailings of a woman whose love was too strong for her. Had he not taught her to regard him as the only man in the world whose presence was worth having? Had he not so wound himself into every recess of her heart as to make life without seeing him insupportable? Could it be possible that, after having done all this, he had no regard for her? Was he so hard, so cruel, such adamant as to deny her at least a farewell? As for herself, she was now beyond all fear of consequences. She was ready to die if it were necessary—ready to lose all the luxury of her husband's position, rather than never see him again. She had a heart! She was inclined to doubt whether any one among her acquaintances was so burdened. Why, oh why, had she thought so steadfastly of his material interests, when he used to kneel at her feet and ask her to be his bride, before he had ever seen Mary Lovelace? Then this long epistle was brought to an end. "Come to me to-morrow,—A. H. Destroy this the moment you have read it." The last behest he did obey. He would put no second letter from this woman in his wife's way. He tore the paper into minute fragments, and deposited the portions in different places. That was easily done; but what should be done as to the other behest? If he went to Berkeley Square again, would he be able to leave it triumphantly, as he had done on his last visit? That he did not wish to see her for his own sake he was quite certain; but he thought it incumbent on him to go yet once again. He did not altogether believe all that story as to her tortured heart. Looking back at what had passed between them since he had first thought himself to be in love with her, he could not remember such a depth

of love-making on his part as that which she described. In the ordinary way he had proposed to her, and had, in the ordinary way, been rejected. Since that, and since his marriage, surely the protestations of affection had come almost exclusively from the lady! He thought that it was so, and yet was hardly sure. If he had got such a hold on her affections as she described, certainly then he owed to her some reparation. But as he remembered her great head of false hair and her paint, and called to mind his wife's description of her, he almost protested to himself that she was deceiving him. He almost read her rightly. Nevertheless, he would go once more. He would go and tell her sternly that the thing must come to an end, and that no more letters were to be written.

He did go, and found Jack De Baron there, and heard Jack discourse enthusiastically about Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball, which was to be celebrated in two or three days from the present time. Then Mrs. Houghton was very careful to ask some question in Lord George's presence, as to some special figure-dance which was being got up for the occasion. It was a dance newly introduced from Moldavia, and was the most ravishing thing in the way of dancing that had ever yet found its way into our country. Nobody had yet seen it, and it was being kept a profound secret, to be displayed only at Mrs. Montacute Jones's party. It was practised in secret in her back drawing-room by the eight performers, with the assistance of a couple of the most trustworthy hired musicians, whom that liberal old lady, Mrs. Montacute Jones, supplied, so that these rehearsals might make the performers perfect for the grand night. This was the story as told with great interest by Mrs. Houghton, who seemed for the occasion almost to have recovered from her heart complaint. That, however, was necessarily kept in abeyance during Jack's presence. Jack, though he had been enthusiastic about Mrs. Jones and her ball before Lord George's arrival, and though he had continued to talk freely up to a certain point, suddenly became reticent as to the great Moldavian dance. But Mrs. Houghton would not be reticent. She declared the four couples who had been selected as performers to be the happy, fortunate ones of the season. Mrs. Montacute Jones was a nasty old woman for not having asked her. Of course there was a difficulty, but there might have

been two sets. "And Jack is such a false loon," she said to Lord George, "that he won't show me one of the figures."

"Are you going to dance it?" asked Lord George.

"I fancy I'm to be one of the team."

"He is to dance with Mary," said Mrs. Houghton. Then Lord George thought that he understood the young man's reticence, and he was once again very wretched. There came that cloud upon his brow which never set there without being visible to all who were in the company. No man told the tale of his own feelings so plainly as he did. And Mrs. Houghton, though declaring herself to be ignorant of the figure, had described the dance as a farrago of polkas, waltzes, and galops, so that the thing might be supposed to be a fast rapturous whirl from beginning to end. And his wife was going through this indecent exhibition at Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball with Captain De Baron, after all that he had said!

"You are quite wrong in your ideas about the dance," said Jack to his cousin. "It is the quietest thing out, almost as grave as a minuet. It's very pretty, but people here will find it too slow." It may be doubted whether he did much good by this explanation. Lord George thought that he was lying, though he had almost thought before that Mrs. Houghton was lying on the other side. But it was true, at any rate, that after all that had passed a special arrangement had been made for his wife to dance with Jack De Baron. And then his wife had been called by implication, "One of the team."

Jack got up to go, but before he left the room Aunt Ju was there, and then that sinful old woman, Mrs. Montacute Jones herself. "My dear," she said in answer to a question from Mrs. Houghton about the dance, "I am not going to tell anybody anything about it. I don't know why it should have been talked of. Four couples of good-looking young people are going to amuse themselves, and I have no doubt that those who look on will be very much gratified." Oh, that his wife, that Lady Mary Germain, should be talked of as one of "four couples of good-looking young people," and that she should be about to dance with Jack De Baron, in order that strangers might be gratified by looking at her!

It was manifest that nothing special could be said to Mrs. Houghton on that occasion, as one person came after another.

She looked all the while perfectly embarrassed. Nobody could have imagined that she was in the presence of the man whose love was all the world to her. When he got up to take his leave she parted from him, as though he were no more to her than he ought to have been. And indeed he too had, for the time, been freed from the flurry of his affair with Mrs. Houghton by the other flurry occasioned by the Moldavian dance. The new dance was called, he had been told, the Kappa-kappa. There was something in the name suggestive of another dance of which he had heard, and he was very unhappy.

He found the dean in Munster Court when he reached his own house. The first word that his wife spoke to him was about the ball. "George, papa is going with me on Friday to Mrs. Montacute Jones's."

"I hope he will like it," said Lord George.

"I wish you would come."

"Why should I go? I have -" said I would not."

"As for the invitation, that does not signify in the least. Do come just about twelve o'clock. We've got up such a dance, and I should like you to come and see it."

"Who is 'we'?"

"Well; the parties are not quite arranged yet. I think I'm to dance with Count Costi. Something depends on colours of dress and other matters. The gentlemen are all to be in some kind of uniform. We have rehearsed it, and in rehearsing we have done it all round, one with the other."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"We weren't to tell till it was settled."

"I mean to go and see it," said the dean. "I delight in anything of that kind."

Mary was so perfectly easy in the matter, so free from doubt, so disengaged, that he was for the moment tranquillised. She had said that she was to dance, not with that pernicious captain, but with a foreign count. He did not like foreign counts, but at the present moment he preferred anyone to Jack De Baron. He did not for a moment doubt her truth. And she had been true, though Jack De Baron and Mrs. Houghton had been true also. When Mary had been last at Mrs. Jones's house the matter had not been quite settled; and in her absence Jack had foolishly, if not wrongly, carried his point with the old lady. It had been decided that the performers were to go through their work in the fashion that might best achieve the desired effect;

that they were not to dance exactly with whom they pleased, but were to have their parts assigned them as actors on a stage. Jack, no doubt, had been led by his own private wishes in securing Mary as his partner, but of that contrivance on his part she had been ignorant when she gave her programme of the affair to her husband. "Won't you come in and see it?" she said again.

"I am not very fond of those things. Perhaps I may come in for a few minutes."

"I am fond of them," said the dean. "I think any innocent thing that makes life joyous and pretty is good."

"That is rather begging the question," said Lord George, as he left the room.

Mary had not known what her husband meant by begging the question, but the dean had of course understood him. "I hope he is not going to become ascetic," he said. "I hope at least that he will not insist that you shall be so."

"It is not his nature to be very gay," she answered.

On the next day, in the morning, was the last rehearsal, and then Mary learned what was her destiny. She regretted it, but could not remonstrate. Jack's uniform was red. The count's dress was blue and gold. Her dress was white, and she was told that the white and red must go together. There was nothing more to be said. She could not plead that her husband was afraid of Jack De Baron. Nor certainly would she admit to herself that she was in the least afraid of him herself. But for her husband's foolish jealousy she would infinitely have preferred the arrangement as now made, just as a little girl prefers as a playmate a handsome boy whom she has long known, to some ill-visaged stranger with whom she has never quarrelled and never again made friends. But when she saw her husband she found herself unable to tell him of the change which had been made. She was not actor enough to be able to mention Jack De Baron's name to him with tranquillity.

On the next morning—the morning of the important day—she heard casually from Mrs. Jones that Lord George had been at Mrs. Houghton's house. She had quite understood from her husband that he intended to see that evil woman again after the discovery and reading of the letter. He had himself told her that he intended it; and she, if she had not actually assented, had made no protest against his doing so. But that visit, repre-

sented as being one final necessary visit, had, she was well aware, been made some time since. She had not asked him what had taken place. She had been unwilling to show any doubt by such a question. The evil woman's name had never been on her tongue since the day on which the letter had been read. But now, when she heard that he was there again, so soon, as a friend joining in general conversation in the evil woman's house, the matter did touch her. Could it be that he was deceiving her after all, and that he loved the woman? Did he really like that helmet, that paint, and that affected laugh? And had he lied to her, deceived her with a premeditated story which must have been full of lies? She could hardly bring herself to believe this; and yet, why, why, why should he be there? The visit of which he had spoken had been one intended to put an end to all close friendship—one in which he was to tell the woman that, though the scandal of an outward quarrel might be avoided, he and she were to meet no more. And yet he was there. For aught she knew, he might be there every day! She did know that Mrs. Montacute Jones had found him there. Then he would come home to her, and talk of the impropriety of dancing! He could do such things as this, and yet be angry with her because she liked the society of Captain De Baron!

Certainly she would dance with Captain De Baron. Let him come and see her dancing with him; and then, if he dared to upbraid her, she would ask him why he continued his intimacy in Berkeley Square. In her anger she almost began to think that a quarrel was necessary. Was it not manifest that he was deceiving her about that woman? The more she thought of it the more wretched she became; but on that day she said nothing of it to him. They dined together, the dean dining with them. He was perturbed and gloomy, the dean having assured them that he did not mean to allow the Popenjoy question to rest. "I stand in no awe of your brother," the dean had said to him. This had angered Lord George, and he had refused to discuss the matter any further.

At nine Lady George went up to dress, and at half-past ten she started with her father. At that time her husband had left the house, and had said not a word further as to his intention of going to Mrs. Jones's house. "Do you think he will come?" she said to the dean.

"Upon my word I don't know. He seems to me to be in an ill-humour with all the world."

"Don't quarrel with him, papa."

"I do not mean to do so. I never mean to quarrel with anyone, and least of all with him. But I must do what I conceive to be my duty, whether he likes it or not."

A "RAG" FOR THE RANKS.

SOMEWHERE about the year '40 it was, I think, that I travelled down from Brighton to Portsmouth on the box-seat of the last real four-horse coach of which I have any personal remembrance. I have sat behind four horses since then, of course. Behind eight, for the matter of that; and a very pretty piece of travelling the eight made of it, while one Malay in a mighty conical thatch, some nine feet in circumference, held the reins, and another Malay wielded in both hands a mighty salmon-rod of a bamboo, fitted with a thong about as long as a Pampas lasso, and flourished, and cracked, and touched-up now the lean flank of the near wheeler, now the restless little pointed ear of the off leader, as we scurried along full gallop over the springy "veldt," just marked with a wheel-track here and there, which passed in those days for a South African highway. But that was a 'bus, with only a "knife-board," a seat on which did not convey to its occupant any sense of personal dignity. There is no box-seat, when the team takes two coachmen to drive it, and Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark omitted, is a complete and perfect work of art, by the side of a coach without a box-seat. As I rattled homewards over the frost-bound Sussex roads, on that last real coach journey some seven-and-thirty Christmases ago, the holidays would have had but an inglorious beginning, had I failed in securing the place of honour by Jehu's side.

Whether my sense of dignity was enhanced or diminished by finding that my father had sent the coachman over from the Island to meet me, I cannot quite recall to mind. I am inclined, however, to think that at first the latter feeling predominated; and it was not until I had asserted my independence, by peremptorily rejecting Thomas's suggestion of "a chop and a cup of tea," and ordering instead, on my own account, a bit of fish and a steak, with a pint of ale and a glass of sherry, that I began to feel that our relative posi-

tions had been properly defined, and to regard "my servant's" blue coat and crested buttons from a satisfactory point of view. If a man doesn't begin to assert himself at seven years old, he may as well make up his mind to be trampled upon all his life.

It was a little embarrassing though, when the dinner made its appearance half an hour later, to find that, by some remarkable oversight, the waiter had managed to invert that part of the order which related to the liquids, and had brought me a glass of ale and a pint of sherry.

Perhaps some cunning psychologist will explain how it is that a waiter has always exercised such a peculiar influence over me. I am not a servants' victim, as a rule. The most magnificent butler that ever rejoiced in diamond brooch and goffered shirt-frill never yet awed me into accepting champagne when I wanted 'ock, nor the sauciest chambermaid into stretching myself on the feverish rack of a too easy featherbed. But your waiter is with me a chartered libertine. He sits upon me, and I am sat upon.

As it is now, so it was when on that memorable night I found myself confronted suddenly with a sturdy pint of fiery inn sherry. It would certainly have been a relief to my mind, could I have summoned up courage to have the little error set right. But—he was a waiter, and I collapsed. Even then, there might have been, perhaps, another alternative. If I had got the sherry, it was not absolutely necessary that I should drink it. But this, if easier, would have been still more inglorious. So, the steak finished, I attacked my decanter like a man, and—somewhat, I fear, to my friend the waiter's disappointment—very soon left in it nothing but the stopper and the smell. Ah me! I doubt if I have ever since enjoyed a play as I that night enjoyed The Golden Farmer, proudly seated in my private box, with Thomas, in his blue coat and silver buttons, respectfully stationed at the back. I was not a big boy of my years, and my head did not come very much above the ledge of the box-front; but, if I had been Prince Albert and the manager of Drury Lane rolled into one, my little presence couldn't have made a greater impression on the talented company than it did. They played right at me, every soul, and I only wonder now that I didn't send Thomas round to the stage-door and invite every one of them, from the lovely heroine to the side-splitting comic country-

man, to sup with me at The Fountain when the curtain fell.

Portsmouth, like the rest of us, has changed a little in those seven-and-thirty years. Southsea Common has bloomed into a fashionable watering-place. Landport has become a little town of itself. Portsea has pushed out its Ratcliff Highway to meet it on the one hand; and, on the other, has mingled its slums with those of Portsmouth proper, till the town-crier himself would hardly know which was which. The dear old fortifications, through which one used to zigzag submissively into the town, right under the muzzles of the mighty guns—only thirty-two pounders, but terrible fellows then—are dismantled; and moat, and drawbridge, and portcullis disestablished and disendowed. The four towns have run into one another like four drops of ink on a sheet of blotting-paper. But the old High Street is not so much changed, after all. A little duller, perhaps, as though what life there was in it has been sucked out by its new offshoots, but still with a look of the old place about it; and as Tom and I passed through it the other day on our way to the big white troop-ship, which a day or two later was to carry poor Tom off on his way back to the gay and salubrious station of Jungleabad, I could almost have fancied myself back on the old box-seat again, and kept a sharp look-out for the once familiar old landmarks.

But with remarkably little success.

"Theatre! Law bless you," replies a slightly inebriated marine, with his belt over his arm, and the upper buttons of his jacket disposed in a *dégradé* fashion, which seriously disturbs the professional bile of friend Tom, softest-hearted of men and stiffest-necked of adjutants. "Theatre! law bless you; why it was pulled down years ago to make room for them big barracks. And as to The Fountain—Fountain be participated. There aren't no such pub in the place."

"A—astin' for The Fountain was you, sir?" chimes in an amphibious civilian in hobnailed boots, short moleskin trousers, a chimney-pot hat, a Guernsey frock, and a strong smell of fish. "Why there it be, right in front of you. Leastways, what was The Fountain. Sogers' Institute it is now."

"Sogers' Institute be participated," interjects the marine—not so much, I fancy, with the idea of any particular anathema, as by way of an abstract remark of a universally appropriate and encouraging character—and pursues his way, swearing discursively

as he goes. I am about to follow his example—at least, in the former respect—when a hand is laid on my arm, and I find myself drawn across the street. Tom has not forgotten the Sailors' Home, which made so profound an impression upon him on that memorable night when we cruised together down Ratcliffe Highway in search of Foreign Jack. And this seems likely to be something of the same kind.

"By Jove! old fellow," he says, as we reach the door, "if it should turn out to be anything of that sort for our fellows, I'd—I'd—Wish the doose I hadn't spent that last five-pound note."

And on enquiry the Soldiers' Institute does appear to be, with a difference, very much that sort of thing indeed. The entrance is the old entrance of the hotel, and at the end of the hall, beyond the staircase, which has been a good deal enlarged since the night when I made way up it after the theatre on my last visit, still stands the old glazed "bar;" with, however, as may be readily surmised, a considerable change in its appointments and appearance. Gone are all the bottles and glasses, the little squat casks that sat in a lordly row upon the shelf round the top, like so many fat little idols receiving the homage of the faithful; the nets of lemons, the basins of sugar, the gorgeous china bowls, the very sight of which seems to call up a cloud of fragrant steam around the appreciative nostrils. The only steam now—and it's a fragrant steam too in its way—comes from the spouts of a score or two of tea and coffee pots. On the counter—once sacred to the compiling of punch, eggflip, and other convivial compounds—a couple of dapper maidens are busily cutting and piling up huge wedges of cake and mighty slices of bread-and-butter. Tom and I try a cup of coffee; and capital coffee it is. The cake and bread-and-butter we are content to take upon trust; but were I once more of the age I was when I last stood at that bar-window, I think, judging from the look of them, I could have found it in my heart to experimentalise in that direction too.

Passing the bar we find ourselves in a long, rather narrow room, the coffee-room of the institute. Not the old coffee-room of the inn, our guide informs us, as I vainly endeavour to recognise the scene of my memorable dinner. The new establishment has outgrown the old accommodation, and another house has been taken in, which supplies both this room and the two large

and airy billiard-rooms beyond it: one for the use of Private Atkins and his comrades; the other, somewhat more sumptuously fitted up, being for the use of sergeants, who pay a trifle more for the more dignified accommodation—a penny a game, if I remember rightly, in the one room, and three halfpence in the other. Pool, our conductor informs us, is not permitted at either table, being held to savour too much of gambling, which is strictly prohibited throughout the building; as, too, is the use of all intoxicating liquors—a feature in which this institute differs both from the Sailors' Home in Wells Street and from that at Portsea hard by—where, by the way, a somewhat lively controversy is just now being carried on upon the subject. As originally stated, the Portsea home also was conducted on strict teetotal principles. Gradually, however, the conviction grew among the majority of the governing body that the cause of sobriety was, after all, but indifferently served by a strict adhesion to it. It was all very well to say that Jack should have nothing to drink but what he was wont to style "slops." Jack had made up his mind that slops didn't suit him, and, as more congenial beverages were to be had in any number of gallons next door, and round the corner, and over the way, Jack would just step next door, or round the corner, or over the way, and take his fill of them, with the result sometimes of not coming back; sometimes of coming back with considerably more vitriol, and coeculus indicus, and fusel-oil on board than was at all good either for Jack himself, or for the peace and discipline of the establishment. So the majority of the governing body came to the same conclusion as that arrived at from similar premises by the governing body of the Wells Street Home, and provided Jack with sound and wholesome beer on their own premises. The result, as is stated in both cases, is that Jack stays now in the home to drink his malt and hops, instead of going in search of vitriol and coeculus indicus and fusel-oil elsewhere, and, now that he is no longer compelled to drink slops, has found out that slops are, after all, very good drinking, and has gone in for gingerbeer to a quite astonishing extent. A minority of the original patrons of the home look upon this concession to Jack's bibulous proclivities as a grave dereliction of principle, and the authorities of the Soldiers' Institute maintain, so far, a similar opinion.

Returning from the billiard-rooms, our guide leads us across the hall once more to what is called the reception-room. And here a little surprise awaits us. Just as we reach the door it opens, and out walks—a dashing young artilleryman, with a remarkably good-looking young woman upon his arm.

Tom opens his eyes, and murmurs an involuntary, "By Jove!"

"Walk in, gentlemen, walk in," says our conductor; and the next moment we find ourselves in the old coffee-room of The Fountain, now occupied by a dozen or so of soldiers of the various arms of The service, and about the same number of women, mostly young, working, laughing, chatting—I had almost said flirting, but that would be a libel, no doubt—but at all events enjoying themselves in highly sociable fashion, and as much at home as any party of ladies and gentlemen in the drawing-room of a country house.

And then, as we make our way upstairs, our conductor informs us that the institute is equally open to both sexes. Not indiscriminately, of course. But soldiers' wives and families are as welcome there as the soldiers themselves. And really, when the first surprise is over, and one comes to think of the thing, it does not seem that Private Atkins is likely to be much injured by having his wife and children comfortably sheltered for a night or two on their way to or from the big white transports, while Mrs. Atkins and the juvenile Atkinses must surely be rather benefited than otherwise. As our guide expatiates upon the hardships often endured by the women of a regiment on the march for want of proper accommodation, and the relief afforded by the provision here made, I observe an abstracted expression, half-stolid, half-anxious, steal over Tom's ingenuous countenance; and note that he is fumbling furtively, now in one, now in another, of the capacious pockets with which his travelling-suit is liberally furnished. The most capacious pockets, however, are apt to lose a good deal of their lining in the course of a long leave, and the anxious expression increases. Suddenly it disappears. A light breaks over Tom's face once more as the furtive fumbling ends in one vigorous dig into a distant corner, and I know that Tom has run a stray sovereign fairly to earth at last.

"By Jove! old fellow," he breaks out eagerly. "It's a splendid notion. I re-

member our chief telling me how our fellows landed here once from Canada, and the women had to sit all night in a row along the kerbstone, because there was nowhere else for them to go to. Splendid notion, by Jove!"

Equally enthusiastic is honest Tom's appreciation of the reading-room on the first-floor—a really handsome apartment, occupying the whole width of the house, and comfortably furnished with leather-seated chairs, sofas, &c., with a long table down the centre thickly strewn with papers and magazines of every kind.

"Good as the 'Rag,' by Jove!" he exclaims. "Not so much gold and looking-glass, and bosh of the kind, you know—but the comfort! I say, though, old fellow, the ladies don't seem to care much about reading, do they?"

Whereon we are informed that the reading-room is not open to the fair sex, who are only admitted to the reception-room below. Tom is at first inclined to think this rough on the ladies, but finally consoles himself with the reflection that women were made, not to study, but to be studied, and proceeds to the inspection of the dormitories. Beyond extreme cleanliness, and a degree of comfort, trenching, as a martinet of the ascetic school might be disposed to think, somewhat closely upon luxury, the majority of these offer no special feature for remark. A characteristic feature, however, is to be found in the large proportion of small rooms, making up, some six, some four, some two beds, and allotted under ordinary circumstances to separate married couples and families. Sometimes of course it will happen that a rush is made upon the sleeping accommodation of the institute, and the choice obviously lies between a tight pack under its friendly roof and a "prick for a soft place" on the kerbstone of Tom's old story. In that case delicacy has of course to be set aside, as it is habitually in the barracks under Her Majesty's regulations; and two, or three, or four married couples have to "pig together" in one room as best they may. But, as a rule, the Soldiers' Institute, differing in this respect rather strikingly from the Sailors' Home, is called in request rather as a club than as an hotel; and the smaller dormitories can be set aside each for the accommodation, if not of a single couple, at least of a single family. Two or three of these contain only one bed each; and better quarters, I venture to say, a

bachelor would find it hard to obtain within gunshot of the fortifications.

Then we wend our way downwards once more, and pass from the dormitories to what may be called the educational branch of the institute.

Here in one room we find a geography class busily studying the various parts of the globe to which father may be sent, the people he will have to meet there, the duties he will have to perform, and the services he may there render to the sovereign whose uniform he wears. Besika Bay and Gallipoli, the Bosphorus, the Balkans, and the Dardanelles, are very familiar phrases in that class nowadays. In another, a couple of dozen Jennies and Pollies are busily mastering, or mistressing, the mysteries of sewing, and hemming, and felling, "seam and gusset and band," and all the other subtleties of needle and thread, scissors and thimble, which shall enable them to keep father's wardrobe neat and tidy at Besika Bay or elsewhere. In a third, a score of chubby mites are pushing, at extra speed, through the orthographic mysteries of words in one syllable, that the room may be cleared for the use of a small battalion of drummer-boys, who have been specially invited to a feast this evening, and for whose peculiar benefit those mighty mounds of cake and huge heaps of bread and butter were being prepared, as we entered, in the bar downstairs.

And then our conductor throws open a door, and ushers us into yet another apartment, with the interesting announcement:

"There, gentlemen. This is the room which has cost us more than all the rest of the establishment put together."

We look around us, first with curiosity, then with surprise; then, if the truth must be confessed, with something of incredulity. The room is not large. The furniture is decidedly not sumptuous. Compared with the big reading-room on the first-floor, the general effect is, on the whole, disappointing—not to say meagre. "A five-pound note," as Tom tersely expresses it, "would buy up the whole blessed diggins," and after vainly searching in every corner, and under every table and chair, for a solution of the enigma, we give it up, and turn to our guide for explanation.

"This, gentlemen, is the bible-room."

"Is it?" says Tom, and looks vaguely round once more, in the dim hope that this oracular statement may have invested some feature of the apartment with the

faculty of explaining the mystery. But, so far as he or I can see, everything in the room wears as severely economical an aspect as before, and we look once more to our guide for aid.

"Well, gentlemen," says he, thus appealed to, "you see one of the principal items in our expenditure is, of course, rent. . Another, not quite so obvious, perhaps, but none the less serious, is the increased cost of working, arising out of the necessity for adapting an old building, or rather, two old buildings, to purposes for which they were never intended. You see how much waste space there is, and how many unnecessary passages and stairs. If we were in a house of our own, built especially with a view to our own requirements, the work could be performed twice as well at half the cost."

"Then why the doose," asks Tom, "don't you get one?"

Our conductor pats the door-post with his right hand, motions with his left, as though formally introducing it to us, and proceeds :

"Because of this room, gentlemen. We are not wealthy, as you may suppose; and land is dear hereabouts. But some little time since we had the promise of a site from the War Office, and by this time had hoped to be working, rent free, in a building adapted to our wants. Then suddenly comes a letter, saying it was understood there was a room in the house where the men could go, if they wished it, to read their Bibles; and, unless this was done away with, the site could not be granted. They do say the Roman priest had gone to the War Office about it, but of course I can't say for that."

"Ah," says Tom, "I see. What they call proselytising, eh?"

"No, sir," replies our guide. "Not at all. The rules are strict, that no person about the establishment is even so much as to ask a man whether he'd like to read his Bible or not. Only if he does like it, there's this room, where he can go when he likes, and read it quietly. And so long as that is so, we're not to have our site."

Tom tugs at his moustache for a minute or more in silence. He has strong military instincts, has Tom, and is withal as little troubled with theological bias as most men of his age and calling, but he has his ideas on the subject of fair play.

However, the authorities have decided that, on Government ground at all events, Full-private Atkins shall not have a chance

of contaminating his mind with theology, even in its most primitive shape. So as the authorities of the institute are equally determined that, if he wishes for the opportunity of reading his Bible, he shall have it undisturbed on their premises at all events, the promised site has been withdrawn, and the institute has to carry on its operations as best it may in its present situation; the extra cost of which comes to a good deal more than the mere additional outlay in rent, rates, &c. The present building is, as we have seen, a makeshift contrivance; not so very unlike, by the way, the "fortuitous concourse" of tumble-down shanties in Pall Mall, with which it is at such serious issue on the great Bible question. Of course, no single room in it was constructed with a view to any occupation in the smallest degree resembling that to which it is now devoted, whilst the necessity for providing additional means of communication and so forth involves an immense waste of space. It is probably not overstating the case to say that a building of the same extent, constructed specially for the requirements of the institute, would give better accommodation for at least twenty per cent. more visitors, increasing, of course, the present cost per head to a proportionate extent. Still, even as it is, with all its waste of space in rambling passages and multiplied stairs and impossible rooms, in just the wrong place and of just the wrong size for the particular work it would be most desirable for them to perform, the institution gets through a tolerably fair amount of work, and affords Full-private Atkins and his friends a tolerably fair amount of accommodation. Close upon eight thousand persons—seven thousand eight hundred and fifty-five is the exact number—have been provided with beds during the past year alone. And as—unlike the Sailors' Homes, which is chiefly used by men on furlough or out of employ—the institute, whose clients must be in barracks when the bugles sound, is used comparatively little as a sleeping-place, it may be imagined that Full-private Atkins avails himself of its more distinctively club-accommodation pretty freely.

And so, having seen, as we suppose, the whole establishment from basement to attic, we are about to take our leave. Tom, whose right hand has stuck for the last half-hour in his pocket as persistently as though he were a midshipman on the watch, has already begun to hang

back, looking uneasily around for some friendly box with a slit in it, into which he can "drop something" unobserved; and I am directing my intellectual energies to the elaboration of a parting compliment of an equally neat and appropriate, though perhaps less practical description, when our guide turns suddenly to left instead of to right, ushers us through a narrow door, and speedily proves to us that we have not yet exhausted the resources of the establishment by any means.

We are now in what was, no doubt, in the old days of The Fountain, the stable-yard of the hotel. But there is not much trace now left of that Augean period. I wonder whether Full-private Atkins plays croquet with Mrs. and the Misses Atkins, or whether here, as elsewhere, lawn-tennis has displaced that ancient form of afternoon dissipation so dearly loved, once upon a time, by guileless maidens with neat ankles and unlimited boot-money. As we cross the broad expanse of carefully-rolled and shaven turf, smooth and level as a billiard-table, I suggest the point for the consideration of Tom, who, in reply, growls with alliterative laconicism :

"Bosh!—bowls."

And bowls it is. As also skittles in the long covered alley on the opposite side; from which comes, every half-minute or so, a low rolling grumble, as of theatrical thunder, followed now by peals of laughter, now by shouts of triumph or of derision, of a heartiness seemingly but little impaired by the ignoring, in the present instance, of the time-honoured connection between "skittles and beer."

What is the precise ground of the distinction our guide does not inform us, and I confess to not having been yet able to puzzle it out for myself; but the skittle-alley, unlike the billiard-room, is perfectly free. Indeed, billiards is the only game for the participation in which any charge whatever is made throughout the establishment; and the pennies accruing from it pay not only the expenses of the billiard-room itself but those of the skittle-alley and of all the other amusements of the place. All, that is to say, but one. And as our guide notes this exception, he throws open the door of a big building, at the lower end of the lawn, and ushers us into—a music-hall!

We rub our eyes, and Tom murmurs under his breath a brief "By Jove!" But a music-hall it is, and a large one withal, and handsome; capable, I should think,

of seating in all at least twelve or fifteen hundred persons, and with reserved seats, balcony, raised stage, and all, complete. And then our guide directs our attention to the concluding lines of the little handbill which sets forth the general programme of the institute, and where we find that "a first-rate musical entertainment will take place in the hall every Saturday night, at thirty minutes past seven. Admission, twopence; balcony, threepence; reserved seats, sixpence; soldiers and sailors, one penny. The chair taken by Miss Robinson."

"Yes, gentlemen," says our guide, smiling pleasantly, in answer to our next interrogatory, "Miss Robinson's our right-hand man here. Started the whole concern, she did; and keeps it going too. Here you are, gentlemen: 'Lady Superintendent, Miss Robinson; 'Address, Scripture Narrative, Miss Robinson, Sunday, three P.M.; 'Children's Band of Hope Meeting, Miss Robinson, Wednesday, thirty minutes past five P.M.; 'United Service Prayer Meeting, Miss Robinson, Saturday, six P.M.'"

"Hallo!" interposes Tom, "I thought the music-hall business was Saturday?"

"Quite right, sir," replies our guide; "thirty minutes past seven that is."

"By Jove!" says Tom again. And says no more. Continues to devour his tawny moustache in the same absolute silence all the way back to our Southsea hotel; is not much more communicative during dinner. Then, when the waiter has finally withdrawn, and we are alone with our consciences and our claret, Tom heaves a big sigh, fills himself a mighty bumper, pushes the bottle across to me, and eyes me sternly through his glass as I fill mine—then :

"Jack!" he says, solemnly.

"Well, Tom?"

"Here's Miss Robinson's health."

Which we drink with all the honours.

URE.

GLINTING in her sunny shallows,
Rolling through the long green fallows,
Glittering under old grey bridges,
Fretting 'neath her willowed ridges;
Whispering to the mosses keeping
Vigil o'er the violets sleeping;
Flashing, laughing, dancing, gleaming,
With the sunshine o'er her streaming;
Rippling to the moonlight shining,
The spirit of her rays divining;
Giving back the glories given,
By rose dawn and golden even;
As age serene, as girlhood pure,
Softly seaward murmurs Ure.

From the moorland, fierce and strong,
Bearing whirling logs along,
Foam-flecks thick upon her breast,
Rousing sleepers from their rest;
Swollen and brown with autumn showers,
Roaring past the old grey towers,
Rushing under great oak shadows,
Swirling over flooded meadows,
Tossing in her tiger play
The harvest's garnered gain away :
Calling through the woodlands sere
How she must "have her life" each year;
Making her dread tribute sure,
Angry seaward thunders Ure.

We, who by our river dwell,
Know her changeful beauty well;
Love her, with a love allied
Half to fear and half to pride.
If Yorkshire lips triumphant claim
Storied honours for her name,
Many a saddened homestead knows
The years her stream in "fresher" rose;
When strength and courage helpless stood,
To watch the work of Ure in flood.
So, glory of our northern dales,
So, terror of our northern tales,
Through rocky dell and purple moor,
Fierce, bright, and lovely, flashes Ure.

MY FRIEND MALLAM.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

THE Priors had not long been with us. Tom Prior had been a fellow of Worcester, a noted scholar, an LL.D., one of the most rising dons of the day, and then had thrown up everything, married a poor woman, and retired to the obscurity of some country living by the sea, because she couldn't live away from it. Naturally, men called him a fool, and forgot him. Now, a dozen years later, the provostship of his old college had fallen vacant; and because Simpson, who was hated by every man in it, would otherwise have stepped into the post, the fellows suddenly remembered Prior's learning and merits, and insisted on bestowing it on him as his due; and I think I was the first of his ancient friends to call on him and his wife after their installation. They had no children, and she was still a confirmed invalid; so as it was the long vacation when they came, I fancied they might be rather dull, and came in provided with a great bunch of late crimson roses to cheer the sick lady. She looked happy enough, however, without them.

They were sitting out on the stone terrace which runs round two sides of the quadrangle, she leaning back on a sort of lounge, and wrapped up in a big maize-coloured Indian shawl, and her husband reading the paper to her at her side. He jumped up when he saw me, and we shook hands for about ten minutes, after which I was introduced to his wife and put

into his chair, while he sat down beside me, and began asking all manner of questions about old foes and friends.

Not that Tom Prior ever had many foes. He was one of those kindly, sweet-tempered fellows who get loved even by men who laugh at them; and his wife, smiling over her roses at us, said I needn't think that she considered herself in the least as a stranger, as she knew all about me and everyone else who had ever been at college with her Tom; and had grown familiar with us from the first month of her married life. Presently, however, she began to fidget a little, and said:

"Tom dear, where's Cecil? Mr. Gurney would like some tea."

And Tom, after two or three helpless glances round, answered:

"To be sure, so he would. Where is Cecil, I wonder?"

"Who is Cecil?" I wondered; and as I do like my tea, and am in the habit of looking for it at some time in the afternoon, I rather hoped the owner of the name—probably Mrs. Prior's maid—would turn up. However, just then Tom appeared to catch sight of someone at a window, for he shouted out, "Hi, Cecily! Tea! Here's a visitor!" in a voice which might have been heard at the other end of the town. There was no reply audible; but the call proved efficacious; for in little more than five minutes a tidy little maid brought us out a tray which she deposited on a tiny round table; and immediately afterwards a young lady came out, slipped quietly into a chair behind it, and proceeded to dispense tea and bread and butter with sufficient celerity and absence of fuss to show, first, that she was used to the duty; and, secondly, that she thought more of those about her than of drawing attention to herself—a sufficiently rare thing in young ladies!

Indeed I don't remember noticing her at all at first. Prior and I went on talking, and the invalid lay back on her cushions, throwing in a word every now and then. It was a fine evening in September, and the sun getting low in the west reddened all the south front of the quadrangle, and burnt like a myriad of fiery sparkles in the yellowing foliage of the tall trees beyond. Above, the sky was a pale, soft blue, warming down into a haze all gold, and rose colour, and tender, delicate lilac. Even Mrs. Prior's pale face and Tom's grey whiskers were suffused with the pinky light. Cecil—she had

only been introduced by the hostess as "my cousin," so I did not know her other name—sat a little out of it in the shadow of the porch. She was arranging the roses in a china bowl; and now and then a slanting golden ray touched one of the blossoms, turning it into a jewel of crimson fire, or rested on her white fingers and the folds of her grey gown, nothing more. I sat there talking till after twilight had fallen, and when I went away I had hardly seen her face. Mrs. Prior was not allowed to stay out of doors after dusk; and her cousin went in with her, and did not again reappear.

I met her on the following day, however. It was Sunday, and I had been to morning service at Holywell, a quaint, simple little church, where a man can say his prayers without being disturbed by a lot of strangers and finely-dressed townsfolk; and on coming out I found myself treading on the heels of Tom Prior. The young lady was with him; and as I took off my hat to her in the bright morning sunlight, I was almost struck dumb by discovering how beautiful she was.

For she was one of those women whom everyone would own to be beautiful. Tall and well-proportioned, with a skin like pearl, and dull gold hair, smooth as satin, and banded round one of the most perfectly-formed heads ever set on a woman's shoulders. Not a girl; she must have been eight or nine and twenty, and there was something in her face which made her look more; but still quite a young lady compared with a man over fifty like myself, and a very lovely young lady too.

We all walked back to Worcester together; and after I had got over the revelation of her looks we got on very pleasantly. There was a pretty mixture of cordiality to her cousins' old friend and high-bred reserve in her manner, which was very charming. You felt as if the cordiality was a special act of grace to you, and might not be shown to everybody; and yet the reserve stepped in just in time to prevent your presuming on it. Then she had travelled, and read books and thought about them afterwards, which, if you've passed the age when a pretty face is all-satisfying, is an additional merit in a woman and a rare one. By the time we had reached home and lunched, which I did with them, I should have pronounced her perfect but for two things—she smiled far too seldom; and

she was more sceptical, especially on the subjects of human nature and truth and goodness, than is to my mind becoming in a young woman.

I own that I like a girl to be bright and sunny and believing. A pretty mouth is always prettier with a smile on it.

We were out in the garden after lunch, talking. To those who don't know Oxford, I may mention that the gardens at Worcester, though not as beautiful as St. John's, or as interesting as New, are green and shady, with a large piece of water at the bottom overhung by fine old willows and alders, their leaves just turning to faint yellow and dusky red under the first night frosts of autumn. Swans float upon its clear brown surface, leaving long lines of silver light behind them, and come to the banks to be fed. We had brought some bread down with us; and as Miss Langton—I had found out her name by now—crumbled and scattered it, I said to her:

"I have told Mrs. Prior I am at her disposal for the whole of to-morrow morning. Do you know I am quite proud of acting cicerone to two ladies who are already familiar with Rome and Venice and Egypt? All the same, don't expect me to own to any inferiority in my own city. If you begin by picking holes at your first outing, I will never take you for a second."

"I don't think you need have any fear of that," she said courteously; and then, her face flushing a little, "but you will not be showing it to me for the first time. It is my cousin who has never been here before. This is my third visit."

"Your third? I am sorry to hear it," I answered; and I was. There would have been something pleasant in showing a place like Oxford to a woman like Cecil Langton. "Is it long since you were here?" She hesitated a little.

"Yes, it is nearly eight years since my first visit, and we only stayed four days; and did very little sight-seeing. I was travelling with my father; and he was taken ill here. As soon as he was able to move we went on again."

"That can hardly be called a visit at all then. Eight years ago, too! Why Keble was not built then. You have not seen the most gorgeous chapel in the university. Yes, you needn't glance back at dear old Worcester here. The provost and I swear by our own gods of course; but wait till you've seen—I forgot, though! You have been here since then, you say. How

long ago was that? and was it a real visit the second time?"

"It was—two years later. Yes, I was here for a fortnight. Is it possible to satisfy a swan's hunger, Mr. Gurney?"

It was then, in the abruptness with which she changed the conversation, that I noticed on her face the look I have mentioned; a strange, fixed expression, which aged and hardened it in a moment; a look which—how I do not know—gave me the idea of a proud nature terribly humbled at some period of its existence, and resenting it both inwardly and outwardly ever since. At the time, however, I did not understand it, and, like a fool, pressed the subject.

"Two years later? Why, that was '71, the year I came back here to live. And, upon my word, I believe I must have met you then. I fancied at lunch that I had seen your face before; and said to myself, 'That is the face which'—By-the-way, do you like compliments? No? Then I won't tell you what I said to myself. No, nor Mrs. Prior either; for she'd be sure to go straight and repeat it to you. Were you not here for Commemoration?"

"Yes, Mr. Gurney, I was." Her face had grown harder, and her manner suddenly brusque—almost, if I might say so, defiant. Mrs. Prior, leaning back in her bath-chair a few steps off, heard the question and answer, and bent forward, an anxious look on her pale, gentle face.

"Mr. Gurney," she said, pleasantly, "you are giving all your conversation to Cecil. Come and talk to me a little. I want to know where you are going to drag me and my chair to-morrow."

That evening, Prior came round to my chambers for a smoke. Something was said of Miss Langton. I believe I mentioned her, praising her beauty and asking if she lived with them.

"Yes," he said, "at least she came to us on a visit, when her brother was ordered to India eighteen months ago; and we have never let her go since. I don't believe Emily could do without her now, and since her father's death she has no regular home. Pretty? Well, some people say she's rather gone off; but she was awfully handsome a year or two ago. Emily says she never knew a girl who has had so many admirers."

"I don't wonder at it. How is it she has not made one of them happy before now?"

"Humph! It is a pity, isn't it? And

that reminds me, Emily told me to ask you not to refer to her last visit to Oxford. You don't mind my mentioning it, do you?"

"Oh dear no," but I suppose my face showed some surprise, for he added:

"I suppose you think it rather an odd thing to ask, and the story's an old one now; but my wife is awfully fond of Cecil, and can't bear her to be pained. I oughtn't to tell you about it, I suppose; but you're such an old friend, and—"

and then of course Prior, being one of those men who can't keep a secret for five minutes if they try, did tell me all about it, and I learnt the meaning of that look in Miss Langton's face, and why she had turned so abruptly from the subject of Commemoration.

She had been staying with friends who had relations at Oxford; and of course not only the relations, but half the relations' friends at the different colleges, went wild about her beauty. Wherever she went she had a troop of admirers. Luncheons and picnics were got up in her honour, and all might have been very pleasant if one of the men had not fallen desperately in love with her, and succeeded in winning her heart. It was one of those cases so clear from the first, and she showed her preference so plainly, that other men drew off, feeling they hadn't a ghost of a chance; and her friends spoke to her on the subject, being afraid they would get into trouble, as she had money, or would have, and the young fellow wasn't rich.

"Well, and then?" I asked, when the story had got so far. I remembered her perfectly now, and of hearing about this very love affair; but I wanted to know his version of it.

"Oh, he was a blackguard," said Tom, impatiently, "and had only been playing with her. When her friends spoke to her she owned he hadn't proposed, but admitted frankly that she cared for him, and that she thought he did for her, and wanted to tell her so. It was only three days then before they were leaving; and, oddly enough, the very next day, though he had asked her leave to call, and she waited at home for him, he never turned up at all. The second day it was the same thing—no sign of him. Her friends thought there must have been some misunderstanding; and as they all liked him and really believed that he cared for Cecil, they wrote to ask him and one or two others to lunch on the morrow,

mentioning that they were leaving next day. He sent back a note declining on some pretext or another, but hoping to call and say good-bye; and never came near them again. I believe they even saw him in the street, and he avoided them. Yes, it was a scoundrelly business; and they say it nearly killed Cecil. She was an awfully proud girl; and had never cared for anyone before. Emily says it was two years before she would even go out anywhere; and I don't believe she'll ever like or put faith in a man again."

"Hum! I've heard men say the same of women, and with a good cause. By the way, who was this fellow? I suppose you know his name."

"No, I don't. Emily may; but she's never mentioned it, so I don't think it likely"—Tom judged the rest of the world by himself; a good many of us do—"Cecil couldn't keep the affair altogether dark; but she made her friends promise not to mention the man's name; and somehow it never reached me or her brother either. If it had, its owner mighta'nt have got off so happily; for Charley Lucas adores his sister."

"Lucas! You mean Langton, don't you?"

"No; a stepbrother by a first husband. Her father hated the lad at one time; but she brought them together when he was ill here; and they made friends shortly afterwards. I say, I must be going. Of course you won't ever hint at my having told you of this affair." And he went.

I lit another pipe and meditated upon it. Prior would have been surprised if he had known I could have told him the name of the man, whose baseness had swept the sunshine out of Cecil Langton's heart six years ago; but surely there must be some mistake; and if so— That night, I sat down and wrote a note to a friend in London, asking him to take pity on my dulness and come down to me for a few days. After that I went to bed.

I had been calling on the Priors two or three days later, and was just saying "Good-bye," after promising to come in to afternoon tea on the morrow and bring Miss Langton a book on stained glass, when I remembered something, and turned back on the threshold.

"After all, I don't know that I can come. I had forgotten that I am expecting a friend to-day from town to stay with me; and unless I may bring him with me—"

"Oh, but do," cried Mrs. Prior, cordially.

"Tell him we shall be very glad to see him. Cecil would be miserable without her book and you to explain it to her." And Tom came after me to the door, calling out:

"I should think, old fellow, you knew that anyone you brought here would be welcome if he were the King of the Cannibal Islands."

Certainly the Priors were among the pleasantest, most good-natured people I ever met.

I said something of the sort at lunch to Mallam on the following day. He was a clever, successful lawyer, six or seven years my junior; but our families had been intimate all their lives, and we had been at the same college. When he learnt from my note that business was keeping me in Oxford all through the solitude of the "long," he cut short a pleasant visit at Twickenham, and came down to me at once; and very jolly it was for me to have him. We had been talking all the morning.

"I don't think you remember Prior," I said to him. "He was before your time. A man of note though, and—"

"Is that the fellow who used to be called Mother Prior?" broke in Mallam. The worst of those London men is, they move and speak and live so quickly, they make no allowance for our pleasant, leisurely way of gathering up and giving out our ideas; and have a trick of cutting us short in rather an irritating manner. "Man who first flung thirty thousand pounds into a ditch, and then kicked overboard a fellowship and all his prospects to marry an old woman without a cent?"

"Exactly," said I, quietly. "The man who threw away a fortune because he was too honest to take a woman he didn't care about with it; and gave up his fellowship and honours to marry a girl to whom he had kept faithful for twelve years, and who had lost her youth and health and prettiness waiting for him, because her father wouldn't hear of it; and she wouldn't rebel against the old man while he lived. That's Prior."

"And Prior was a fool," said Mallam. "Well, what judgment has happened to him since?"

"None in particular; except that, with an invalid wife and a smallish income, he's been as happy as a king ever since; and that now he's been made provost of his old college, and is happier than ever."

"Curious dispensation of Providence that fools often are happy in their folly," said Mallam, cynically. He was a man

who had had a disappointment in early life, and had taken life with the bitter rind on ever since; but I didn't mind him, being perfectly aware that, in spite of his sneers, he had at one time lived hardly and fared plainly to keep two young step-sisters at an expensive school, and at another had sacrificed a Continental tour to save an old servant's son from prison, and set him going in a new country. He would have quarrelled with and cut me to a dead certainty, if I had even given him an inkling that I knew of these little weaknesses. Nevertheless they were facts.

"What about the Priors now?" he asked leisurely, and helping himself to another outlet.

"Only that I've promised to go there this afternoon and take you with me. I should rather like you to be civil to them, Hugh. The wife is a dear little woman, who has managed to keep a smiling face through years of horrid bodily pain; and she has confided to me that a great thorn in her side was the fear that Prior had ruined himself by his marriage, and that his old friends are of that opinion. I want to show her she is mistaken."

"In other words, back him up in his past idiocies, and encourage other idiots to future ones," said Mallam, coolly. "All right, I'll go; it's nothing to me. Any children?"

"No, none. They have taken a distant cousin though, an orphan, to live with them; but—"

"People who have just enough to keep themselves always want to keep a dozen others," put in Mallam, in the aggravating way I have mentioned before; and so I did not get an opportunity of adding anything more about Cecil Langton.

It was about four o'clock when we got there. The sun was shining in at one window through a framework of leaves, green, and gold, and red, and flooding that end of the room with yellow light. Cecil sat just in the centre of it. You could see nothing of her face or person, only a tall dark figure in a blur of golden haze. I don't think Mallam even glanced at her, for Prior came forward, shaking hands with us both in his cordial way, and taking him across the room, to introduce him to the pale face gleaming pleasantly out of its background of red cushions in a warm corner. It was not till a minute or two had passed that he looked round and said:

"Cecil, are you there? Mr. Mallam, my wife's cousin, Miss Langton."

I had just shaken hands with Miss Langton, and I shall never forget the change which came over her face, as she looked up and her eyes met Mallam's. For a moment I thought it was that she had stepped out of the golden haze into the shadow, but she had not moved an inch; only her colour had faded quite away into a dead, ashen tint, which made her very lips grey; and her eyes opened wider and wider, and a sort of quiver passed over her mouth. She did not speak a word, only bowed; and Mallam, who had started and flushed all over his face, like a man struck a sudden, heavy blow, bowed too. Then he said, slowly and with some hesitation:

"I—I think I have met Miss Langton before." The dark colour deepened in his face, and he added, hurriedly, "Not that I can expect her to remember me."

Cecil looked at him full. There was something almost cruel in the hard stare of those beautiful eyes.

"No," she said coldly. "I do not remember you. You must be under a mistake." And then Mallam bowed again and asked her to excuse him for it. He was the coolest of men generally, with one of those stern, impassive faces which nothing moves. I had never seen him so discomposed before. She stepped back into her seat by the window, and he went and sat down by Mrs. Prior. But even here my introduction did not seem a success. Perhaps something in his manner reacted on hers, but the gentle lady was not half as bright and pleasant as usual. There was a nervous, flurried expression in her eyes, and her manner was decidedly constrained. If it had not been for Tom's irrepressible geniality I don't know what I should have done. Cecil, indeed, was talkative enough, and devoted herself to me and my Flemish book with an assiduity which was very flattering, seeing that there was a younger and handsomer man in the room. But I hardly think her mind was in the subject either, for she asked me the most irrelevant questions at the end of some of my most careful explanations; and laughed at points which did not seem to me to have any humour in them. I scarcely thought her as intelligent as usual.

Tea was brought in and put on the little table by Miss Langton. Tom had called me off at the moment; so Mallam rose, as in duty bound, to assist her with the cups. He did not speak; nor did

she, only gave them to him in silence. But her hand must have been less steady than usual; for presently, as she was handing him his own, either through her awkwardness or his, there was a sudden clatter, and the cups went over, part of the contents being spilt on her dress. Mallam stooped instantly, taking out his handkerchief to dry it, in spite of her exclaiming almost sharply that it was no matter, and giving an impatient jerk to her dress to free it or shake the drops off. Their hands came in contact for a moment by the action—only a touch, but I saw her tremble suddenly, and the colour rush into her face, making a dull red spot in either cheek. She slipped out into the garden almost immediately afterwards by the open French window, and did not return again. We could see her tall figure in its black dress passing to and fro between the upright stems and purple and scarlet blossoms of the dahlias. The low rays of the sun lit up the under side of the leaves, turning them into transparent golden flakes, and rested on her little shining head, as she went backwards and forwards, never once glancing at the house. We did not stay very long after she was gone.

STRANGE WATERS.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON,

AUTHOR OF "OLYMPIA," "PEARL AND EMERALD," &c. &c.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER II. BLASÉE.

PEOPLE like Lady Quorne, who studied the advertised programmes of the coming operatic campaign with the same unconquerable faith and hope which others keep for queen's speeches, and with the same obstinate determination to find something in them, prophesied a brilliant season. The chapter of operatic history, of which these are the secret *mémoirs pour servir*, is already half forgotten—but it once belonged to the future, as much as the half-forgotten season of yesteryear.

And it was to be exceptionally brilliant, not because of its printed promises, magnificent as they were—that went without saying—but because those who assumed to be behind the scenes knew on the best authority, and as an unquestionable fact, that there was to be a battle. The amateurs of harmony enjoy nothing so much as the prospect of a good quarrel, in which gold will be shed like water; and the most per-

sistent applause comes, not from admiration, but from an eager desire to prove, by the logic of noise, that all who admire somebody else are fools. It was on the eve of such a storm that Mademoiselle Clari arrived, once more, in London.

She herself, though conscious of a dead weight of cloud overhanging her future, knew infinitely less of what was in store for her than anybody. The most remarkable feature in all revolutions is, that everybody always knows what is coming except the person most immediately concerned—namely, the king; or, in this case, the queen. But then Clari notoriously never knew, or cared to know, what was going on even in the next room. All the curiosity about her had always been on one side, and that not on her own. She knew that Prosper was her enemy, and that compelled her, or at any rate made her suppose herself compelled, to sweep him away into nothingness, if he actively tried to harm her, with one fan-sweep; for even such midges as managers might mean mischief in these coming days of cloud. But for the complex ins and outs of musical politics, the great *prima donna* had an indifference too complete even to be contemptuous, just as a great statesman has for the little springs and wheels of the political engine. If they go smoothly, all the better for him; if they hitch and stick, so much the worse—for the wheels. He cannot waste time in greasing and grinding, and learning the names of things which he feels himself strong enough, in case of need, to break and throw away. In short, there was perhaps never a woman who knew so little of her profession as Clari. There had been a sort of magnanimity even about what she regarded as the practice of conscious imposture. That a certain amount of dirty work had to be done in her interest she knew, but she never allowed it to soil her own fingers. She had never slandered a dangerous rival, had never bought a newspaper puff, or a claque, or even one of the bouquets which are always so magically ready to be thrown with practised aim precisely at the right time. Of course all these things had to be bought by somebody, and, while Prosper was faithful, she never found herself a bouquet the poorer for want of knowing how they came. And, even since he had been faithless, she found no less warmth in the tone of the musical journals—for the simple reason that she never read them.

It was by a far more subtle instinct

that she had come of late to feel her power upon the wane, than by the gross experience from which Prosper had saved her. And she was right in the main; though a lessening command over her voice, and an increasing furrow between the eyebrows, might not be an immediate cause of de-thronement, it was the cause most obvious to herself, and must in time become so to all the world. Only it was therefore, and just at this hour, that she needed the arts which are to fame in danger what rouge is to a fading complexion. She missed nothing yet but self-confidence; but Prosper's desertion had been uncomfortably like the conduct of the rats when a ship is growing unseaworthy. She did not fear him, but even a manager will show which way the wind blows. And so, like a queen who thinks to conquer a nation in revolt by stepping on to the balcony, and smiling upon a few noisy nobodies in the square below, she came to London, heedless of what was brewing. The despised little wheels will catch and rend even their master at times, after all, and great and strong as he may be.

Her bouillon had developed into a very satisfactory meal; and when that was eaten she was better. That mention of Prosper, whether designed, instinctive, or accidental, had given her an immediate purpose—that is to say, something to live for, for a little while. To conquer Prosper was not much wherewith to fill a hungry heart and an empty life; but it was better than nothing while it lasted—better, at all events, than an aimless chaos of whims. Both Ilma and Thérèse felt that morally, as well as bodily, they were off the sea. In the railway-carriage Clari had said:

"Ilma, you do look ill! There—I will make you a pillow with my cloak, and you shall sleep a little. No? Yes, but you shall; and if you do not I will throw my cloak from the window."

Ilma closed her eyes obediently, and stopped the stare which had made Clari think she was going to be disobeyed. Ilma was young yet—perhaps in time she, too, would learn not to stare at an occasional longing to care for somebody besides herself, in the heart of a woman who begins to feel herself being left stranded with no one but herself to care for. Clari, satisfied with ostensible, which presently grew into real obedience, drew up both windows of the carriage, lay back in a corner, and looked at the girl whom she had wrapped up in her furs. There was

every reason why Clari should have made a protégée of Ilma, exactly because there was every reason why nobody else in the world would have done so. The Polish fiasco was of that perverse sort of prettiness which nobody ever admires, because it is made to express only one set emotion, and that disagreeable. Her eyes were large, her nose was straight, her complexion clear, and her mouth small, and all united in a settled look of sullen conceit; of sullenness, that is to say, so satisfied with itself as to be incapable of supposing any other frame of mind to be possible. She gave the impression of always being engaged in a fencing-match, and always on guard—except when she gave some little unexpected thrust, which stung, and made people feel that there was something more in her than appeared. To Clari she was a slave—and queens of Clari's type like having a slave or two on whom to vent their more trifling humours. But to like having a slave is not to like the slave; so that would not account for Clari's fancy for Ilma. Perhaps, when healthy instinct is balked, it is bound to run into eccentric and morbid grooves. Caprice apart, one can make a greater business of liking the unamiable than of liking those who make us like them, whether we will or no. Ilma had no apparent merits, no friends, and no likelihood of making any. Of all people in the world she seemed to need love most—of all people under heaven Clari most needed the sorriest chance of loving, and of being all to somebody if nobody could be anything to her. If this be not the reason, I know not what is—it is at least better than any that Clari had for most of her behaviour. And then, if a certain child had lived, she too would be just as old as Ilma. And then—Ilma could no more be Clari's rival than the moon can rival the sun. If the last was no cause for liking, it was becoming less and less a cause for disliking, every day.

The train was on the very point of starting, when the door was opened quickly and there entered, together with the salt English air which the prima donna had been so careful to exclude, a man who had been too nearly letting the train go without him to take heed of his fellow-passengers till the engine had whistled and started. The furrow between Clari's eyebrows grew yet deeper; she had intended to travel alone with her own thoughts as far as London. Ilma had at least the one charm of never intruding. But in a

moment the frown relaxed ; she put a few touches more languor into her half-reclining posture, and smiled graciously.

" You may smoke if you please, Monsieur Gordon."

" What—Mademoiselle Clari ! Can we have been fellow-passengers from Calais, and not met till now ? "

" I think people always meet afterwards. We were below, Mademoiselle Krasinska and I, till the last half-hour. It was a terrible voyage, but it is over now. Oh, of all things I hate the sea. It is ugly, and cold, and when it is calm it is dull ; but last night it was a monster."

" I wish I had known you were on board. But—Mademoiselle Krasinska ? Can it be the Mademoiselle Krasinska I used to know in Lindenheim ? "

" Lindenheim ? " Now, no German, or English, or French, or Russian, or American musician would believe it, but Clari had never heard of the musical metropolis ; or, if she had, it was only as one hears by chance the name of some obscure village, which one forgets as soon as it is heard. " I daresay. People always have met before. But you must let her sleep now. It is good for people to sleep all they can, while they are young ; they will have plenty of time for waking after, and it gets rid of some life a little. Are you sleepy ? "

" Not the least."

" Nor am I. You shall smoke if you like, and I will talk, as it suits me. You have not finished my picture—no ? I am sorry ; I should like to look always as in last summer, among the cucumbers of my Lord Quorne. We were good friends then. So you know Ilma ? Well, it is a poor little world, and always the same. The same things to eat and to drink and to sing, the same things to do, the same places, the same people—every day, every day, every day. One changes one's clothes, Dieu merci ! If not for that, one would change nothing. Yes ; and at the end one changes them for a shroud—ah, but that will be worst of all. Lying still in a box, and every minute the same—it would make one mad of ennui. You have been en voyage ? "

Omen the second. The name of Death had slipped out of her lips without cause ; and everybody who has even a scrap of ignorance will know what that means. It was as bad as Bath-kol, of which Noëmi Baruc had heard in the Ghetto ; the mystical relation of all things to all other things, which turns the most casual

words of a passer-by into prophecies—for those who keep their ears wide open. Butterflies are not given to speak of death, and Clari least of all butterflies. She cut her audible thought in two by a commonplace question, put as suddenly and defiantly as if she could not wait a moment for its answer.

" Yes," said Walter Gordon. " I think it is going to rain."

" Will you hand me my fan ? Thank you. To rain ? No ; there is not a cloud. It is not like when we met in the auberge. No ; and you are not the same."

" I ? Why ? "

" Because you say it is going to rain. You used always to say, it is going to be fine—last year. Yes ; even when the dog and the cat fell down."

" But you are the same, mademoiselle—and that is the great thing."

" Yes," she said, raising her shoulders carelessly. " I am the same still—for a little. I eat, and drink, and sing. I rise and dress, and I undress and I lie down. It is delightful to be a great artist, monsieur. It is not being like the others. Ah, if I had been born a man ! "

" Be thankful, as the world is, that you were born a woman."

" Thankful ? I am thankful for nothing. I care for nothing. I want to go to sleep, like Ilma. Ah, how the young would sleep, if they only knew ! We should not see much of them."

" You remind me of the way we used to talk at Lindenheim—where we were all eighteen and all as old as the hills."

" I am a year older than a year ago—and you—"

" Ten years older ? "

" No ; twenty. You have lived, my friend, since a year ; and ' la Vie, c'est la Souffrance,' as poor Alphonse de Cauchemar used to say. He used to read me all his own verses till he died—so he ought to know. They were all written to Cynthis ; I do not know who she was, but Victor Perrier said her real name was Absinthia, made short for rhyme. Did you ever meet Alphonse de Cauchemar ? Ah, he was a great poet ! He once wrote a poem that took him three weeks to read. He broke his heart all to pieces, and he sold the bits to keep him in gloves and cigars. Poor Alphonse—he was bien ganté to the end."

Since she was in a mood to be sentimental, no doubt poor Alphonse de Cauchemar was as good a peg for senti-

ment as any other. She sighed, fanned herself—it being a cool morning—and lapsed into reverie. Walter opened his newspaper, while Ilma still slept peacefully.

The train meanwhile rolled smoothly on. But suddenly Walter made a quick exclamation over some startling piece of news. Clari looked, and saw that he was reading hurriedly and intently.

"What is it, mon ami? Ah, it is good to be a man; one can care for the newspapers."

"The Cleopatra—it is announced; it is going to appear."

"The Cleopatra?"

"Yes."

"A new opera? I have not heard. But, after all, what does it matter? It shall not give me anything new to learn."

"You are going to sing, in London—and you have not heard of the Cleopatra?"

"Ah, it interests people, then?"

She used her fan in the way which Hinchford experience ought to have told him, was a symptom of possible heat on the part of the woman who cared for nothing. She was not used to hear that people were going to be interested in anything or anybody but Mademoiselle Clari. It was a peculiar wave of the fan, which might signify either the cooling of unwished-for warmth, or the blowing of a chance spark into a flame.

"It interests me," said Walter.

"Somebody is going to sing in it," said Clari, sharply. "Who?" Which meant, however it may be with other people, you, at least, ought not to interest yourself in anybody but Mademoiselle Clari.

"Oh, some—Good heavens!"

"Well?"

He folded up the paper and looked abstractedly at the hedges and trees as they whirled by. Clari began to fan the spark rapidly.

"Well?" she asked again, icily.

Walter faced her slowly. "Miss Celia March is going to be the Cleopatra."

"Oh, an Anglaise!" said Clari, snapping her fan together, raising her shoulders, and curling her lip with what would have been contempt, had contempt been worth while. "They do not count—the Anglaises; not in your country. I do not see why a young man should be ashamed to care about a pretty girl. I hope she will be a very nice Cleopatra—yes, very nice indeed!" she added, throwing open the fan again.

"You don't remember her?"

"Remember her? No. How can I remember what I have never seen?"

"You heard her at Hinchford—last year. She came with Gaveston, and sang to you and Lady Quorne."

"Ah! That girl? She is gone on the stage?"

"So it seems," said Walter, gloomily.

"And you object? *Corpo d'un*—! You have a great care for this Miss Cynthia, Miss Celia, whatever she is called, monsieur. You said, she is going to be Cleopatra, as if you would say, she goes to the guillotine."

"Care? I am simply at my wits' end."

"I believe it—per Bacco! I will lend you mine, if you will. What! is it strange for a girl to go on the stage? It is only strange if she succeeds. And she will fail! Yes; I remember her very well. Why are you at your wits' end?"

"I will tell you. You have heard me speak of my uncle, Andrew Gordon? He composed an opera called *Comus*; it was revived last year, last autumn, and made a furore, and no wonder. You were not in England, or you would have known. One evening I met Prosper at Lady Quorne's; he told me of his quarrel with you, and then he talked to me about the chance of my uncle's having left something behind him. There was nothing—absolutely nothing; but I joked about reviving him, or inventing a discovery, or something of that kind. The next day—if I was not mad—I saw with my own eyes the score of this Cleopatra, with my uncle's name, Andrew Gordon, signed at the end."

"You—saw—Andrew—Gordon's—Cleopatra?—With—your—eyes?"

There was a clear pause between each word. Noëmi Baruc felt the coming shadow of the third omen, and could hardly breathe.

"I need not tell you all the details. A great deal happened, that concerns me only. The end of it is, that I have been abroad—in Italy. I made it my business to look for every trace of my uncle. Short of his proved death, I found all that need be known. He disappeared so completely that he could only have died. And now—"

Clari laid back her head, closed her eyes, moved her fan slowly, and sang, *sotto voce*, as if thinking of nothing,

Portatemi il diadema—col mio sangue
Desij divini sorgono dal cuor;
Ari divengo e fuoco: appena langue
Sul labbro un bacio di terrestre amor.
Antonio mi chiama—

"Mademoiselle—if I am not indeed gone

mad—you are singing the last scene in the Cleopatra; I saw it in the score! In Heaven's name, what does this mean?"

"It means," said Clari, half-opening her eyes—"it means that Miss Cynthia, Miss Celia, will sing in the Cleopatra of Signor Andrew Gordon. Yes; of Andrew Gordon. And it means," she went on, with a note of triumph in her tone, "that she will fail. There is no living woman can sing that music. No; not one!"

So she spoke, and so she felt; but Noëmi Baruc had but one intense thought that flooded heart and brain.

"That girl whom Signor Walter loves is to be made to sing by Prosper, whom I come to crush, in the work of the man who slew my life and my child. Tooth for tooth, eye for eye. Thank God, that, dead though he is, he lives in his work, that I may slay his soul!"

"But—but the air," said Walter; "you know the Cleopatra? When—how?"

"How? I have learned that scene in Italy—perhaps in Milan, perhaps in Rome; who knows? It came back to me when you spoke of Cleopatra. Ah, and many things! But I am tired. I will sleep till we arrive."

"One moment—one! You do not know all that this means to me. You knew Andrew Gordon. Why have you never said so, when you knew—?"

"Why should I speak of him? Yes; I have seen him—in Rome. A woman will not speak too much of times long ago. It is true. I was a child."

"Would you—would you know him if you saw him again?"

Clari paused. She was desiring vengeance, but as yet was planning none. She only felt, and the feeling was as yet but an outcome of the desire, that, in some unseen manner, her enemy was surely delivered into her hands. For that matter, all her enemies—for their three heads grew from the same stalk, the Cleopatra, just as Domitian wished that the heads of his foes might grow, so that one sharp stroke might suffice for all. Not that such small heads as those of Celia and Prosper counted for much any longer. The possible rival must be swept away, and Prosper crushed; but the grand revenge on her arch-enemy, living or dead, would imply

all. Life would have been worth living at last, if it had led her at last to one hour of full revenge. But meanwhile she only grasped a shadow. As yet she knew nothing, but that one hasty word or false step would ruin the whole vision of judgment, and bury herself in the ruins.

"No—yes," she said sleepily. "Who knows? Per Bacco, not I. How can I see a dead man?" She shuddered a little. Twice she had spoken of death in a single hour. "I wish I was a man. Perhaps I should not want to sleep when I am tired; and perhaps I should not want without getting my way."

She put up her feet on the seat before her, turned her shoulder to Walter, and lay silent and still. After all, he thought, what was it to her? He might as well deal with running water as with Clari of the thousand moods. He had come back from Italy, assured that the Cleopatra must needs be an impudent forgery, and that his Bohemian uncle had, beyond question, disappeared from the world of men. And now, beyond question, the Cleopatra was genuine, and the ex-organist of Deepweald, and Celia—To think was impossible.

Was John March his uncle Andrew? No. He had denied Comus; and it was as natural to base a theory upon the possibility of Beethoven's denying Fidelio.

And "no" again; for his uncle had had every reason to assert himself, and none to lie concealed. A man does not bury himself from every chance of wealth and fame, or starve in a garret when gold is waiting to be poured into his hands.

Andrew Gordon had disappeared. Cleopatra was in the hands of John March; John March was starving, and Prosper needed Cleopatra. Men of the Bohemian type occasionally disappear in Rome, as well as in London. And, when an artist dies, his effects must fall into other hands than his own. Men have been murdered for their gold before now. Why not for the gold of their brains? John March was at any rate no common man—Prosper, no common rascal. The receiver makes the thief; and Celia—once more, to think was impossible. The trees and hedges reeled by faster and faster, and his brain with them.

Ilma, with a long yawn, opened her eyes.